



MICHAEL J. SHERIDAN
STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Testimony on Assembly Bill 233
Assembly Committee on Education
Tuesday, September 25, 2007
417 North, State Capitol

Thank you, Chairman Davis and Committee Members, for holding this public hearing on Assembly Bill 233. I appreciate this opportunity.

The idea for this legislation was brought to me by a constituent who left high school to join the United State Marine Corps and serve in Vietnam. While serving in the military, Gary Truman studied for and earned his GED. During his service in Vietnam, Mr. Truman incurred a service-connected disability. He is now 59 years old.

Under Section 120.13 (37) of the State Statutes, Wisconsin veterans who are 65 years of age or older and who left high school before receiving a diploma to serve in the military during a time of war are eligible to receive a high school diploma. As was pointed out to me, the 65-year age requirement was included in the law because that is the age commonly associated with retirement and because a high school diploma can affect employment. Under current law, Mr. Truman will be eligible to receive his high school diploma in seven years.

It is a sad truth that service-connected disabilities force many disabled veterans into early retirement and often drastically reduce a veteran's life expectancy. AB 233 would lower the age requirement for veterans with a service-connected disability to 55 years of age and allow veterans like Mr. Truman to receive their diplomas now. Although diplomas under Section 120.13 (37) can be awarded posthumously, I hope that you will agree that disabled veterans and their families should not be forced to wait.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak here today. I am happy to answer any questions you might have.